

# Rockford Historic Preservation Commission

October 7, 2008 - 6:00 PM

Conference Room B

Rockford City Hall

**Present:** Laura Bachelder, Mark McInnis, David Hagney, Maureen Flanagan

**Absent :** Ald. Doug Mark, Thomas Graceffa, Sally Faber

**Staff :** Ginny Gregory, Arianne Clarke

**Others:** Dick Johnson, Jim Pantazelos

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## Approval of Minutes

David Hagney made a **MOTION** to **APPROVE** the minutes for the meeting of September 9, 2008 as submitted. The motion was seconded by Maureen Flanagan. The motion **CARRIED** by a vote of **4-0**.

## NEW BUSINESS

### Certificate of Appropriateness – 904 North Prospect Street

Jim Pantazelos was present with the architect for the property, Dick Johnson. Jim explained he originally wanted to demolish the house as it was in bad condition and rebuild a more modern house on the property. When he bought the house, Jim was not informed the house was in a historic district, so he had already begun removing the siding when a neighbor informed him of the house's historic status.

The current plans for the house consist of removing the existing garage and placing an attached two-car, two-story garage on the other side of the house. Both porches will also be removed. The house will be expanded several feet and a basement dug throughout the expansion. Vinyl siding will be added throughout.

Maureen Flanagan asked if the proposed remodeling will completely surround the original home. Jim replied it would. David asked if the proposed remodeling shown on the drawings had the required setbacks. Dick replied he wasn't sure, but probably not. He further stated he hadn't had much time to review the proposal, and the proposed entrance may need to be adjusted. Ginny Gregory asked if the home will be single family. Jim replied it would, and there would be a master bedroom above the garage.

David asked Ginny what the guidelines were for demolitions. Ginny read the following out of the Design Guidelines for Historic Properties in Rockford:

Demolition is not permitted within historic districts or on landmark sites unless one of the following conditions exists:

- The demolition request is for an inappropriate addition, a non-significant portion of a building, or a non-significant accessory building or buildings which are significant as determined by RHPC.

- The demolition request is for a non-contributing building and the demolition will not adversely affect the character of the district.
- The building official of the City of Rockford certifies that demolition is required by the public safety because of an unsafe or dangerous condition.
- A Certificate of Economic Hardship allowing the demolition is obtained.

If demolition is approved by the RHPC, then the following guidelines apply:

- Make a permanent record of any significant structure before demolition occurs. The record shall consist of black-and-white photographs taken just before demolition takes place, and any other documents, such as drawings, that may exist that describe the architectural character and special features of the building. The Commission determines on a case-by-case basis the precise documentation of a specific building that is required and the person who is responsible for producing the documentation. The documentation must be submitted for review by the Commission before the demolition permit may be granted. The record is retained by the City of Rockford.
- Work with the Commission to identify salvageable materials and potential buyers or recipients of salvaged materials. The removal of all salvageable materials before demolition is encouraged, and may be required, depending on the significance of the building.
- Submit a site plan showing proposed landscaping and any other site development to be completed after demolition. A demolition permit will not be issued until such a site plan has been reviewed and approved by the RHPC.
- Clear the structure quickly and thoroughly.
- Plant the site or appropriately maintain it until it is reused. If the site is to remain vacant for over one year, it should be improved to reflect an appearance consistent with other open areas in the district.

Dick mentioned there was another demolition in the neighborhood, but wasn't sure where. Ms. Gregory stated there were two demolitions allowed by the Historic Preservation Committee in Haight Village.

Mark believed the proposed reconstruction wouldn't maintain the original character of the house. Jim stated the two porches were completely rotted away.

Maureen asked if the specifications on the drawing were different than the specifications on the application. Jim indicated they were different. The application calls for vinyl siding, but he found out after turning in the application that he couldn't use vinyl siding.

David asked if zoning of the property needed to be addressed. Ginny replied if the Commission approved the proposed reconstruction, on the certificate it should be noted, "subject to approval by Zoning and obtaining the necessary permits."

Mark read a section from the guidelines for additions:

Additions to historic buildings should not visually overpower the original building, compromise its historic character, or destroy any significant features and materials. The integrity of the original building can usually be maintained by placing additions on inconspicuous elevations and limiting their size and height. It is important to differentiate the addition from the original building so that the original form is not lost. While the addition should be compatible with the

original building, it should not be indistinguishable from the original – it should be possible to tell what's new from what's old. And finally, as with any new construction project, the addition's impact on the site in terms of loss of important landscape features must be considered.

Laura Bachelder stated the proposal was swallowing the house whole. Ginny agreed the original house would disappear.

Mark asked Jim how long he had owned the house. Jim replied two weeks. Mark asked if the siding was torn off when he bought it. Jim replied some of it. He stated there was asbestos problems. Mark asked if the realtor mentioned the historic value of the property. Jim replied not at all. He further stated when he called the realtor, Jasper St. Angel with Coldwell Banker, after discovering its historic value the realtor claimed to have no knowledge of this. Jim also indicated the title company, Security Title, also claimed no knowledge of the historic value. Ginny stated all historic properties are recorded with the County Recorder's Office and title companies should be able to see this.

Laura mentioned the possibility of a workshop for title companies discussing the importance of historic homes. David asked if MLS should be contacted. Ginny stated that had already been done. Ginny asked Jim if his home was on a multiple listing. Jim stated it was.

Maureen asked if Jim had gotten title insurance. Jim replied he had not. Maureen suggested contacting a real estate attorney. Maureen asked if the City could condemn the property. Ginny stated if the building official certifies the house must be demolished that would overrule this Commission, but she didn't believe there was much chance of that happening.

David made a **MOTION to DENY** the request for a Certificate of Appropriateness because it does not follow the guidelines for additions which states additions to historic buildings should not visually overpower the original building, compromise its historic character, or destroy any significant features and materials. He believed the proposal was more of a demolition than an addition. Mark seconded the motion. The motion **CARRIED** by a vote of **4-0**.

#### **Approval of text of Economic Impact of Designation**

Ginny asked the Commission to approve the text for the booklet on the economic impact of local designation on property values so she could move ahead with publication. David asked if the document presented to Commission was the final version. Ginny stated the text is complete, but Rockford Area Economic Development Council will improve the formatting and overall look. Maureen stated this document should be delivered to realtors. Ginny stated she spoke with Steve Boise, who is the head of Rockford Area Association of Realtors. He did not seem to understand what the document was for, and his only suggestion was to include crime data. It was generally agreed this was not appropriate. Ginny indicated she had contacted the Police Department regarding Steve's suggestion and was told crime data is collected over a general area and can't be determined for a small area which is required for this document.

Maureen Flanagan made a **MOTION to APPROVE** the Economic Impact Designation as written, with the formatting corrected. David seconded the motion. Motion **CARRIED** by a vote of **4-0**.

### **Section 106 Review, Keith Creek Flood Properties**

Ginny indicated that she had received a request from IHPA to review a proposal for using funds from the IL Emergency Management Agency to demolish homes the City has purchased along Keith Creek. These are part of the program the City initiated after the second 100-year flood there in 2007. She distributed photographs of houses along Keith Creek and indicated these photographs were just a sampling not the entire list of homes. She stated she had all of the photographs of the damaged houses on file. David asked how many houses the City owned. Ginny replied 96 were currently owned by the City and the City had applied for an Illinois Emergency Management Agency (IEMA) grant to cover the expense of demolition. All of the homes owned by the City are now vacant, which is causing additional problems.

Maureen asked if the City was planning on demolishing all the homes purchased. Ginny replied the City was. Ginny explained the cost to repair the bulk of the homes was more than 50% of the market value of the homes. Several of them had a repair cost of over 100% of the market value even without the current economic problems. Also, anytime the repair cost to a house exceeds 50% of the market value, it is required to elevate the home, which is detrimental to the historic value and can add an additional \$20,000. She also noted these homes suffered two years of flooding damage and it was likely this would occur again in the future.

Maureen wondered what the City's plans are after demolition. Ginny stated the City planned on leaving a greenway along Keith Creek, possibly with a partial bike path. Since there is a high chance of flooding in the future, no new permanent structures would be permitted. The main purpose is to open the floodway so flooding is contained within the greenway and doesn't spill out into the neighborhood.

David asked if any houses would not be demolished. Ginny stated the City is buying or has already bought all houses from owners willing to sell. However, any house whose homeowner is not willing to sell will remain standing.

David asked what will become of the Lutheran Church or the Boy Scouts building. Ginny stated the only non-residential structure she was aware of was a store front on 11<sup>th</sup> Street and an old grocery store. Mark asked how many homes in the entire flood damaged area had not been purchased yet. Ginny replied there were 118 houses on the flood list, and the City had already purchased 96, leaving 22 houses left to purchase.

Ginny reminded the Commission that their role in a Section 106 review such as this is to indicate whether any historic properties are being impacted by the proposed action and if so, whether that action would have a negative effect on them. If there is a negative effect, then the Commission can propose ways to mitigate it or it also has the option of not commenting at all.

David asked if Opsahl's across from Rockford Plaza will be demolished. Ginny replied the building was in the floodway but it had not been sold to the City.

Mark asked about the detail in the building such as fireplaces, windows and doors. He wondered if anyone would be salvaging the details and added it was a waste to just throw them away. Ginny stated she contacted Brian Eber about salvaging but hadn't heard back from him yet. She thought most of the interior details, unless they are on the 2<sup>nd</sup> floor, would be in bad shape. David asked if the contractor for the demolition got salvage rights. Ginny replied it would depend on how the contract was written, but normally the contractor gets salvage rights.

Mark didn't think demolition contractors were doing much salvaging and would like to change this practice. Ginny stated it was possible to add this as a comment.

Ginny mentioned it has been asked if it were possible to move the homes but there were problems with moving them. There would need to be a place to move them to and it was cost prohibitive to move that many homes. The houses would also need to be structurally sound, and after two years of catastrophic flood damage, it was doubtful if these homes would be structurally sound.

Mark asked how a contractor would be selected. Ginny replied there would normally be a bid process, however two houses had to be immediately demolished due to the danger they posed. David asked where the refuse would be taken. Ginny didn't know. Mark believed the brick could be reused. Mark asked if a separate contractor could be used to collect the salvage. Ginny stated it depends on how the bid spec was created but this Commission could ask.

After some brief discussion, Ginny indicated she would comment on behalf of this Commission the understanding this demolition was required and the desire for some detail salvage, possibly with a separate contractor doing the salvage.

#### **Meeting Schedule for 2009**

The Commission agreed to continue meeting the first Tuesday of the month, unless there was a holiday.

#### **Other**

Ginny stated the Landmarks Illinois Annual Preservation Dinner will be held on Friday, October 17, 2008 at the Chicago Club. Anyone who is interested in attending can claim membership since HPC is a member.

The meeting adjourned at 6:51 PM.

**Respectfully submitted by,  
Arianne Clarke,  
Sr. Administrative Assistant  
Community Development Department**